

# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

*pro bono humanis generis*  
1230 YORK AVENUE - NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021-6399

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

November 16, 1987

Dear Gene:

Thank you for your note of November 9.

There is a religious strain to my upbringing: my father was an orthodox rabbi; and I early made a compact with him to pursue scientific knowledge as my own alternative to the Torah. I am deeply respectful of efforts to ask the eschatological questions that "science" sweeps under the rug. But I am still very much caught up in process (viz. of enquiry) rather than answers.

As to the origin of life, I thought I had included (and now do) my notes on alternatives to Oparin-Miller

-Urey. They are a far cry from panspermia; though I think my 1958 article did revive attention to that contingency. If there are Martian ejecta among the meteorites in Antarctica, it is hard to give categorical "no's" to that proposal; my inclinations are to frame questions that can lead to experimental tests.

As to the galactic barycenter, my input was again a purely contingent one -- the text is enclosed -- namely a reasonable place to look, IF one stipulated a superior exo-intelligence. I offered no opinions about there being one.

I was disappointed in "Contact", and wrote Carl accordingly: his theophany is so crude, like the "magicians' tricks" that Pharaoh complained of to Moses -- and he had his own problems of persuasion without the second revelation of the decalogue, this time engraved on stone!

Have you seen the book "The anthropic cosmological principle"

(JD Barrow + FJ Tipler, Oxford, 1984).

*The digits of  $\pi$  are not a random sequence; and even if they were, somewhere would appear any message you wish.  
cf. Borges "The Library".*

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

Dr. F. E. Yates

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